

MILITARY PERSONNEL, FINANCIAL
SERVICES PROTECTION ACT

SPEECH OF

HON. K. MICHAEL CONAWAY

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 27, 2005

Mr. CONAWAY. Mr. Speaker, I wish to express my strong support for H.R. 458, the Military Personnel Financial Services Protection Act. This legislation protects the men and women of our armed forces from predatory lenders that target service members.

There are a number of companies known as "military lenders" that offer our troops ill-advised and costly products, such as loans with exorbitant rates and hidden fees. They often cluster around military installations and aggressively target service members and their families, who are uniquely vulnerable to these abusive marketing and collection practices. As an example, the zip code 76903 of San Angelo in my Congressional District borders Goodfellow Air Force Base and has 11 banks and eight payday lenders.

Unfortunately, a large number of our young troops have limited experience dealing with financial matters and many fall victim to abusive lending practices. Additionally, they often have relatively low incomes which may lead them to borrow in order to pay current expenses and debts. This is especially troubling in a time when we are experiencing extended troop deployments and families at home are struggling to make ends meet while the service member is deployed. The problem has become so pervasive that the Pentagon has launched a new effort aimed at educating our troops and warning them about the dangers of abusive military lenders.

Not only do these predatory lending practices affect the financial well-being of the men and women of our armed services, but it also threatens the operational readiness of our military. The last thing we need is for service members who are putting their lives on the line for our nation to be overwhelmed with financial stresses back home.

H.R. 458 addresses this problem by imposing certain restrictions on various types of specialty lenders that target service members. Additionally, it protects the interests of service members by requiring additional disclosures with regard to these types of loans. H.R. 458 is responsible legislation that protects the rights of the men and women of our military while still affording them options with regard to their finances.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the House of Representatives for passing this legislation and addressing an issue that is vitally important to our nation's dedicated troops.

RECOGNIZING AN ENVIRON-
MENTAL MILESTONE AT SMITH-
FIELD FOODS**HON. J. RANDY FORBES**

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 11, 2005

Mr. FORBES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commend publicly Smithfield Foods and its many employees, an important corporate citizen from my district in Southeastern Virginia.

Smithfield has long been known throughout the United States as the leading producer of pork and other outstanding meat products. This spring, Smithfield Foods earned another important distinction. It was certified by the International Standards Organization (ISO) in Geneva, Switzerland as having met or exceeded the ISO's high standards for environmental management. It has achieved its aggressive goal of ISO 14001 certification for all Environmental Management Systems, EMSs, in its U.S.-based hog production, and all its U.S. pork and beef processing facilities, except recent acquisitions.

Smithfield is the first domestic processor of meat to earn certification under the ISO 14001 Standard—that is the gold standard for environmental stewardship not just in the United States but across the globe. To obtain ISO certification for its environmental practices, a company must meet a rigorous and comprehensive set of standards developed by more than 2,000 experts worldwide. It is a distinction that is a credit to Smithfield's leadership, and to its entire workforce.

This was not the first milestone that Smithfield has achieved for its stewardship of our natural resources. Last month, our Commonwealth's Department of Environmental Quality, DEQ, awarded eight Smithfield Foods facilities with its Virginia Environmental Excellence Program designations. Six Smithfield facilities received Exemplary Environmental Enterprise, E3, status, and two others achieved Environmental Enterprise, E2, Status.

As our State's Secretary of Natural Resources said in making these awards: "Smithfield Foods has made superior environmental performance a management priority. This E3 designation shows that the company has made significant improvements in the management of its facilities in order to protect Virginia's environment." Smithfield has received other awards from states and communities all across our great country.

Mr. Speaker, what is particularly significant about these milestones is that they have been achieved less than 10 years after Smithfield Foods received a large civil fine under the Clean Water Act for discharges into the Pagan River in Virginia.

So what did Smithfield do? In response to those events and others, Smithfield embraced what one executive recently described as a "culture shift" in its approach to environmental issues. Smithfield has embraced the simple idea that protecting the environment is not just the right thing to do, but smart business as well. And because Smithfield Foods has embraced environmental stewardship throughout the company, in many cases going beyond what is required by our laws, my district and many other parts of the United States are better places to live and work.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Smithfield Foods on its environmental turnaround and the recent recognition it has received for that progress in my district and across the country. I am confident that Smithfield will stay on this course in the years ahead.

FOREIGN OPERATIONS, EXPORT
FINANCING, AND RELATED PRO-
GRAMS APPROPRIATIONS ACT,
2006

SPEECH OF

HON. CHRISTOPHER SHAYS

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 28, 2005

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 3057) making appropriations for foreign operations, export financing, and related programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2006, and for other purposes:

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Chairman, I rise in support of international wildlife conservation efforts and the Global Environmental Facility, GEF.

Protecting and preserving our environment is one of the most important duties I have as a Member of Congress. We simply won't have a world to live in if we continue our neglectful ways.

I support maximizing the GEF's resources, leveraging the highest possible contributions from the other donor countries, and demonstrating U.S. leadership on international environmental issues.

The GEF is the primary financing mechanism for important environmental work around the world, helping developing countries address the many environmental challenges associated with ending poverty and enhancing economic development. Since its establishment in 1991, the GEF has provided \$5 billion in grants, leveraged \$16 billion in co-financing for projects in 140 countries around the world, and has provided more than 4,000 grants directly to community groups and non-governmental organizations. The U.S. has provided close to \$1 billion to the GEF over this same time frame.

Because other countries' contributions are indexed to the United States' level of support, we have the ability to either gather great resources for the global environment or greatly limit the international response to issues such as tropical forest loss and the decline in coral reefs worldwide.

Funding the GEF is a good investment. Choosing to make the highest commitment to the GEF will truly help define American leadership on environmental issues to the rest of the world.

REMEMBERING BOUNCER SENA

HON. TOM UDALL

OF NEW MEXICO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 11, 2005

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today to pay homage to John "Bouncer" Sena who passed away on June 26, 2005 at the age of 77. A mentor, friend and family man, he leaves behind relatives who loved him, friends who admired him, students who respected him and a city that mourns him.

At age eleven, John was told that he looked like a "bouncer" and the nickname stuck with him the rest of his life. As a sophomore, Bouncer Sena was a tackle on the Santa Fe